

Circular Letter #73

October 31, 1928

Special Teachers of English to
help promote the Wider Use of
English.

GOVERNMENT OF PORTO RICO
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER
SAN JUAN

ADDRESS ALL OFFICIAL
COMMUNICATIONS TO THE
COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION
SAN JUAN, P. R.

October 31, 1928.

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SUBJECT: Special Teachers of English to Help Promote
the Wider Use of English.

Supervisors of Schools, and
Special Teachers of English:

Up to the present, the activities of the Special Teacher of English in the grades have practically been limited to the teaching of classes in English to her pupils. Whenever conditions have demanded it she has taught classes in other subjects also. In some instances she has helped in conducting the professional reading classes for teachers.

Under the present conditions, however, as the use of English is becoming more of a necessity in our every-day life, the position of the Special Teacher of English in each locality seems to point to the fact that the scope of her activities should include specifically the promotion of the wider use of English, particularly spoken English, not only in the school or system of schools in which she works, but in so far as possible, in the community itself. For this reason the Department of Education wishes to organize the Special Teachers of English in the grades throughout the Island this year in such a way that in cooperation with Supervisors and Principals and under the leadership of the General Superintendent of English, they may carry out a plan directed to accomplish the above aim.

In small towns in which there is only one Special Teacher of English, the development of this plan will devolve upon this teacher in cooperation with the Supervisor and Principals. In larger communities, where there are more of these teachers, the work may be divided among them, each teacher taking charge of a different phase of the work. In the largest systems of schools, where the number of these teachers is considerable, each phase of the work may be entrusted to a group of them, one of the teachers of the group in each instance being designated as the responsible head for that phase.

To begin with, the following activities are being suggested which may be assigned to different Special Teachers of English according to the number of them in each town. Other activities may be added which in the opinion of the teachers, and Supervisors may be of some value in promoting the wider use of English.

1. Pupils' English Clubs: The Special Teacher of English assigned to this phase, with the advice of the Supervisor and Principals, should see to it that all teachers in the system of schools in which she works organize these clubs and that the clubs function regularly. She should prepare helpful suggestions and plans and should attend as many of the meetings of the "regular clubs" as possible. She should also meet the teachers and help them overcome any difficulties that they may have. In case that more than one Special Teacher of English is assigned to this phase of the work each teacher so assigned might take charge of the club work in certain grades only. "Side Lights" Nos. 1, 2 and 3 issued last year will be found helpful.
2. Teachers' English Clubs: Reports received from nearly every school district, as well as our personal observation at the various meetings attended, have clearly shown that the Teachers' English Clubs that were organized last year, with very few exceptions, were a real success. The Teachers' English Clubs may be made the means of promoting a genuine interest in the use of the spoken language. The Special Teacher of English in charge of this phase should see to it that these clubs are organized and that they function regularly.
3. Young People's English Clubs: Membership in these clubs may be limited to certain pupils in the upper grades who have an unusually good command of English, and to worthy young people of the community who also have an excellent command of the language even though they are no longer active members of the schools. These clubs may also be made up entirely of young people of the community who speak the English language and who are not members of the schools.

Pupils' "regular" English clubs should not meet oftener than twice a month. Teachers' and Young People's English Clubs should meet at least once a month.

4. Contests: The Special Teacher of English in charge of this work, in cooperation with Supervisor and Principals, should offer whatever help she can to conduct successful local contests and should attend to the proper training of pupils for the yearly sectional and insular declamatory and essay contests. She should see to it that all children are given an opportunity for some training to try for all local contests and that those who are finally selected for the outside contests are given the very best training possible. Wherever possible, two teachers or two different groups of teachers should be assigned to Contests, one to the declamatory and one to the essay contests.

5. School Libraries: This movement should aim to organize an English library in each school, for the use of children in grades 5, 6, 7, and 8. The books to be placed on the shelves of these libraries should be selected from the lists already issued by the Department of Education or from any other lists that it may issue in the future. The titles of books not found in these lists should be referred to this Department, for approval. The Special Teacher of English assigned to this phase of the work, in cooperation with Supervisor and Principals, should help devise a plan whereby the books may be purchased and actually read and reported upon by pupils. In quite a number of instances the parent-teacher associations are known to have helped in this in past years. School funds, also, have been liberally contributed towards the purchase of library books for pupils. The system of dividing the class in each schoolroom into groups of three or more children each and of assigning a different book to each group to read and to report upon orally after a certain length of time has proved successful wherever it has been used judiciously. After each group has read its book and has reported on it, all the books are collected and redistributed, a different book being assigned to each group again. This process is continued until all the books in the library have been read. The "library hour", in which each child in the room reads from a different book or periodical is, perhaps, the best method. Wherever it is possible, one of the three reading periods in the week may be taken for this purpose. The manual training classes may help in making book and magazine racks. Periodicals should be found in the libraries for grades six, seven and eight. The Pathfinder, the Youth's Companion, Current Events, Popular Mechanics, the American Boy and other such publications would be highly appreciated and enjoyed by pupils.
6. The Teachers' English Libraries: Good fiction, books on subjects of interest, magazines and newspapers are thought of as good material for these libraries. The round-table conference, the "reading hour" and the oral reports at meetings, on the literature read, are some of the ways in which the Teachers' English Libraries may function. Influence should be brought to bear upon the people responsible for town libraries to subscribe for magazines and to purchase books in English for its shelves. The Review of Reviews, the Literary Digest, The Scholastic, The World's Work, The Ladies' Home Journal, The Woman's Home Companion, The Delineator, The Cosmopolitan, The American, Good Housekeeping, the Sunday edition of The New York Times and such other publications would make excellent reading.

7. Publication: The following activities are suggested:

(a) Articles written by teachers, which may be published in *The School Review* or in the Island newspapers.

(b) Articles written by teachers, for publication in the English section of local school papers. Copies of school papers published this year in San Germán and Yabucoa have been filed with this office. Similar newspapers were published last year in San Germán, Mayaguez and Ponce.

(c) Compositions written by pupils, for publication in local school papers.

(d) Articles written by teachers and compositions written by pupils, which may be published in Island newspapers.

(e) Establishment of school papers wherever conditions are favorable.

Articles and compositions described under (a) and (d) above should be sent to the General Superintendent of English. Articles and compositions described under (b) and (c) should be sent through the Supervisor of Schools to the editors of the local papers. Copies of all issues of local newspapers should be filed regularly with the General Superintendent of English.

8. Use of English:

(a) Within the school: 1. Pupils and teachers. 2. Teachers among themselves. 3. Pupils among themselves.

(b) On school premises: At recess and on the playground.

It is felt that outside of (a)1-, above the use of English cannot be made compulsory, but it is suggested as a measure that will result in the better and freer use of the language. The Teacher of English in charge of this phase of the work, in cooperation with Supervisors and Principals will be able to accomplish a great deal in this if the subject is approached intelligently.

9. Grade Meetings: The system of organizing teachers by grades is hereby recommended. In large systems the teachers teaching the same grade should organize and conduct their meetings in English. In smaller systems it may be necessary to organize the teachers in Primary, Intermediate and Upper grade clubs, each club conducting its meeting in English. The Special Teacher of English

in charge of this work, in cooperation with Supervisor and Principals, should offer helpful suggestions and should encourage the teachers to meet regularly. In addition to problems arising in the schoolroom, professional books and magazines may be discussed at these meetings.

10. Evening Classes for Adults: The work recommended under this heading should consist of classes in oral English only, the membership consisting of a limited number per class of adults who speak the English language or who have a knowledge of it. It is suggested that the duration of this class period be not over one hour. The very best teachers should be assigned to this work. Whenever it is thought convenient graded teachers also may be assigned to this phase of the work. School Directors and teacher-parent associations may be willing and able to help these teachers to pay their expenses.

Supervisors of Schools are hereby requested to meet their Special Teachers of English as soon as practicable after the receipt of this letter, for the purpose of going over its contents together and of planning for the accomplishment of the work herein suggested.

On or before November 20 each Supervisor of Schools shall send to this office a brief statement, in the form of a list, of the work assigned to each of the Special Teachers of English in each of the towns in his district in compliance with this circular letter.

On or before November 30 each Teacher of English, responsible for work assigned to her pursuant to this circular letter, shall file a report with this Department stating what she has done as well as what she plans to do for the rest of the year to further the interests of the work entrusted to her, the said report to be forwarded through the office of the Supervisor of Schools. In addition to this, each Special Teacher of English shall be expected to keep a notebook in which she will record all her activities in detail in compliance with this circular letter.

Yours very truly,

(Signed) JUAN B. HUYKE,
Commissioner of Education.